March/April, 1984

Lasca Leaves

Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

BALDWIN BONANZA XIV

When the California Arboretum Foundation scheduled their inaugural plant sale for the first Sunday in May, they created the perfect source of gifts for Mother's Day that follows the next week. This year Baldwin Bonanza XIV chairman, Virginia (Mrs. C. A.) Stein, plans to capitalize on the sale's timing by offering even more blooming plants than usual on May 6. At the preview party Saturday, May 5, CAF members and their guests can enjoy refreshments while they make advance selections from among the exotic or popular plants. The party continues from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

Besides the popular cymbidium orchids and hanging baskets of fuchsias, the committee has added proteas – South African shrubs that produce distinctive, long-lasting flowers – and phalaenopsis orchids that are commonly called "moth orchids" because their delicate, flaring petals seem to perch along the flower stalks. Mrs. Stein and her committee have also gathered an extensive selection of velvety flowered gloxinias and colorful hybrid pelargoniums this year. Individual cut stems of proteas that can be used in dried arrangements when the fresh colors fade will also be for sale.

William Aplin

The Chinese fringe tree (Chionanthus retusus) *derives its common name from billows of narrow white petals that almost hide the foliage in mid-summer.*

Among the thousands of plants for sale, some are expected to arouse special interest among plant collectors and gardeners, according to John Provine, Arboretum superintendent, either because they are particularly well suited to local gardens or because the plants are seldom offered by local nurseries.

The batflower *(Tacca chantrieri)* will intrigue plant enthusiasts who are willing to care for a houseplant in exchange for its startling flowers. Tissue-thin, wing-like bracts that fan out from the base of blackish-maroon flowers and trailing white filaments inspired the rather sinister common name for a beautiful, exotic plant.

A number of tropical palms that are almost impossible to find from other sources in this area make interesting houseplants while young until they eventually outgrow their containers. Then they can be moved to the greenhouse or, in the case of *Neodypsis decaryi,* can be grown outdoors in a frost-free microclimate. Pritchardia species like *P. hillebrandi* are among the easiest palms to grow in tubs as long as they have ample water and good drainage. Two palms native to islands in the Indian Ocean, *Verschaffeltia splendens* and *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis,* are quite tender and slow growing but have unusual characteristics like prominent stilt roots or thickened trunk bases that make them worth experimenting with in this area. The Panama hat plant *(Carludovica palmata)* has stemless palm-like leaves and requires the same cultural conditions as the other tropical palms available at Baldwin Bonanza XIV.

One of the most popular features of the annual plant sale will again be the Arboretum introductions that draw plant collectors from all over Southern California. When visitors

The bizarre blackish-maroon flowers of the batflower (Tacca chantrieri) *will appeal to Baldwin Bonanza shoppers who enjoy floral novelties. Photo by William Aplin.*

see the yellow trusses of flowers on several of the cassia trees brought to this area by the Arboretum, they often try unsuccessfully to find them in local nurseries. To fill the growing demand for these medium-sized trees that fit into most gardens, several new cassia species including *C. multijuga* and *C. excelsa* will be for sale in five-gallon containers.

Although the Chinese fringe tree *(Chionanthus retusus)* is a tidy small tree that does very well in this area, it is not easy to find. Gardeners lucky enough to own one are rewarded in late spring with frothy white blossoms that almost hide the leaves which themselves turn a vivid yellow in the fall. A good supply of both five and 15 gallon-size fringe trees will be for sale at Baldwin Bonanza XIV.

Gardeners who have space for a more imposing addition to their landscape will be able to choose

William Aplin

Baldwin Bonanza is one of the few local sources for the golden medallion tree (Cassia excelsa), *a small tree introduced into Southern California by the Arboretum.*

Steven Smith

In mid-November the Rich Musser Construction Company completed an extension of the ramada on the south side of the Ayres Hall of Environmental Education. Total cost of construction was about $20,000.

among several other trees that have been field-tested at the Arboretum. If they buy a *Eucalyptus deglupta* sapling like those west of Ayres Hall, they can expect it to grow to 30 feet within a few years. By the time it reaches its mature height of 80 to 100 feet, its upright growth habit will best be visible as a silhouette against the horizon. Close up, the bark, striped with wine, chartreuse and slate blue, makes a colorful garden accent.

Another large tree, the red silk cotton tree *(Bombax ceiba)* that was introduced by the Arboretum in 1982 bears waxy vermillion flowers in the spring. Since the bombax tends to bloom while still young, trees like those planted north of the juniper collection should soon produce the flowers and spreading form to be expected from the grafted cultivars for sale.

Several Asian pear cultivars that need a minimum of winter chilling will be added to the edible plants booth this year. Although they are called apple-pears because the rounded fruit has the sweet, crunchy texture typical of the crispest apple, Asian pears are true members of the pear tribe. 'Shinseiki,' is a self-fruitful variety that will hold its heavy crop on the tree for from five to six weeks after maturity with little deterioration in quality. Both '20th Century' and 'Chojuro' should be planted with another pear to ensure good fruit yield.

On Sunday, Las Voluntarias y Los Ayudantes will have their traditional children's booth where young gardeners can do some independent plant shopping without interference from their elders. The volunteers have been growing easily cared for plants and will decorate them with flags or suckers for the sale. Most of the plants, priced between 50¢ and $1, also include tags with information about the shape and flowers the plants will eventually produce.

In sum, the CAF volunteers and Arboretum staff have added enough new features to last year's favorites to make Baldwin Bonana XIV another in a long line of profitable plant sales.

WENDY SEKOVICH TO REVITALIZE LASCA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

SUNDAY AFTERNOON walking lectures were for years one of the most popular programs at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum in Arcadia. Budget cuts in past years, however, forced elimination of these weekend ventures around the grounds. Now, after a layoff of several years, the cavalry has come to the rescue in the form of the California Arboretum Foundation. The CAF recently provided funds to employ a new education specialist, Wendy Sekovich. New education specialist she is, new to the Arboretum she is not.

For the past three years, Mrs. Sekovich has been a volunteer field leader here conducting educational field trips on plant identification. Because she relates well with children, she has guided hundreds of special tours for Southern California elementary schools. That was the volunteer side of life for Mrs. Sekovich; her vocation was equally important. As the herbarium assistant to Dr. Robert F. Thorne at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont, Cal., she helped establish new plant collections, oversaw administrative functions of the herbarium and developed a docent training program.

Steven Smith

Wendy Sekovich

Besides re-establishing the Sunday tours, Mrs. Sekovich will be busy filling many diverse needs at the Arboretum. Prime among them is the re-creation of the program of mini-courses. Some of the many courses taught will feature shade, container and patio gardening, dealing with the care of both shade and sun tolerant plants around the home.

Another branch of class-field training entails interpreting popular gardening trends. The Arboretum is studying the current gardening fashions, and Mrs. Sekovich's responsibility will be to incorporate this information into popular courses such as rose pruning and vegetable gardening.

Mrs. Sekovich grew up on a ranch in Arizona and earned a bachelors degree in fine arts in illustration from the University of Arizona at Tucson. After a career as a retail executive and self-employed silversmith, she returned to UCLA for a two year program leading to a certificate in "Gardening and Horticulture." Mrs. Sekovich and her husband, who is interested in landscape architecture, live in Glendale.

So, thanks to the California Arboretum Foundation and Wendy Sekovich, badly missed programs will once again be regular highlights at the Arboretum.

(LASCA continues after page 32)

By James Bauml

LASCA Plant Collections

THE LOS ANGELES STATE and County Arboretum is first and foremost a place for people. The 127-acre grounds are designed and planted as a living resource with the needs of the community in mind. The plant collections constitute the basis for the Arboretum facilities and activities.

The plant collections serve a threefold purpose: education, enjoyment and research. With respect to the first goal, that of education, the plants are arranged in several different ways: by geographic origin; by

William Aplin

A grove of native oaks (Quercus engelmannii) *creates an atmosphere of timeless tranquility on Tallac Knoll.*

William Aplin

Many new agapanthus cultivars were developed at the Arboretum.

botanical relationships; by horticultural and other uses; by special cultural requirements; and for other purposes.

The greatest portion of the Arboretum collections are arranged geographically into the African, Australian, South American, Mediterranean, Asiatic/North American and Southwestern Native Plants sections. The African Section contains acacias, agapanthus, aloes and many bulbs. Collections of acacias, brachychitons, callistemons, cassias, casuarinas, eucalyptus, grevilleas, hakeas, melaleucas and xanthorrhoeas are located in the Australian Section. The South American Section includes many acacias and cassias along with chorisias, erythrinas and tabebuias. The Asiatic/North American Section is host to the expanding magnolia collection, berberis, birch, hypericums, hollies, prunus and viburnum. The Southwestern Native Plant Section contains the agaves, yuccas and ceanothus. Plantings of begonias, orchids, junipers, palms, bamboos, pines, hibiscus, ficus, oaks and platyceriums are found elsewhere on the grounds.

Certain collections demonstrate a common horticultural application. Groundcovers for both normal and low water situations are laid out for comparison. Likewise, vines and turfgrass displays are available for comparing plants for specific landscaping needs.

Some plants are grouped together because of certain specific cultural needs. For example, the Tropical Greenhouse contains the very frost-tender species, while the Aquatic Garden and lagoons are places for plants with high water requirements.

Finally, other plants in our collections are grouped for other specific reasons. In the Demonstration Home Gardens, one can enjoy several vignettes of solutions to patio landscaping problems. The Garden For All Seasons is host to seasonal flowers and vegetables for home gardeners. The oak collection is planted to complement a relict stand of native Engelmann oaks as they grew before the arrival of the Europeans. The Prehistoric and Jungle Garden is home for plants considered botanically primitive or those which are also known from fossils many millions of years old. The Old Fashioned Rose Garden and citrus grove complement other plantings in the historical area reminiscent of days gone by. The Herb Garden features plantings of herbs arranged by the particular culture in which they play a part as well as by specific uses (i.e., culinary, medicinal, beverage, etc.).

With education a primary purpose and function, colorful interpretive centers have been erected in the African, Australian and Prehistoric Jungle areas to provide visitors with insights into the collections in each area. Special displays such as the recent poisonous plants exhibit in the rotunda contribute to public awareness. The Arboretum strives to maintain full and accurate labelling on all plant accessions. Handsome contemporary metalphoto labels are currently being prepared both to identify and to provide cultural information for each species.

However, not every visit to the Arboretum need be taken with the goal of obtaining information. The human needs for beauty and privacy are also met here. The Arboretum collections provide a quiet year-round retreat from the bustle of the city. The seasonal color of flowering trees and shrubs from around the world is set into this sanctuary of open space.

The shifting seasons spotlight various areas of the gardens as different plants come into bloom. In the spring, Meadowbrook becomes the showplace when flowering temperate zone trees such as the azalea-flowered nectarine 'Alma Stultz' begin producing their pink and white flowers. Bordering the stream, beds of iris provide color at ground level with a collection of dwarf and tall bearded iris interspersed among the spuria iris and aquatic Louisiana iris.

Other areas maintain their unique beauty year-round. Stark shadows cast by the rugged trunks and branches of the Engelmann oaks *(Quercus engelmannii)* on Tallac Knoll create a feeling of timeless tranquility. The opposite atmosphere, one of a lush jungle, is maintained in the Tropical Greenhouse. Here a constant procession of orchids from the Arboretum's noteworthy collection is brought in as the flowers unfold to accent the luxuriant growth of vines, ferns and bromeliads.

Finally, the collections are for research. New species and horticultural forms are being accessioned and planted with the goal of choosing new and better ornamentals for landscaping in Southern California and in other mild climate regions. Meanwhile, existing plantings are

continually re-evaluated as potential introductions. Five, 10, 15 or even 20 years may pass before a plant is deemed truly worthy of introduction. Over this period, feedback is provided by the grounds staff, superintendent and others to provide a basis on which certain special plants may ultimately be released to the public. Many factors will influence this decision: ultimate size and form, vigor, resistance to disease and pests and quality and quantity of flowers. The Arboretum is also looking ahead to the future needs of the community. For example, with projected increases in residential water costs, greater emphasis is being placed on quality ornamentals that will perform well with minimal water usage.

By 1984, nearly 100 outstanding trees, shrubs, groundcovers, vines and perennials had been selected from Arboretum plantings and introduced to the public. Some well-known examples include the popular freeway daisy *(Osteospermum fruticosum)* with its several selections, Cape gold *(Arctotheca)* and gazania, all groundcovers. Other introductions including *Agapanthus* 'Mood Indigo,' the shrubby blue hibiscus *(Alyogyne huegelii)* and its selection 'Santa Cruz' are beginning to appear in local landscapes. The pink and yellow trumpet trees *(Tabebuia),* the golden medallion tree *(Cassia leptophylla)* and other cassia trees have also been received enthusiastically by Southern Californians. The search continues for seeds of promising new ornamentals from around the world. Arboretum expeditions, domestic and international seed exchanges with more than 1,000 botanical gardens and plant specialists around the world are among the sources being tapped to fuel the ongoing plant introduction program.

The research program includes the collecting and mounting of plant specimens from the extensive Arboretum collections. These are incorporated into the expanding herbarium as an invaluable permanent reference collection used by the

William Aplin

Flowering trees such as the nectarine (Prunus persica) *'Alma Stulz' make Meadowbrook a springtime showplace.*

staff, the public, the nursery industry, governmental agencies, universities and other herbaria in identifying samples of unknown introduced plant materials.

The Arboretum collections are already a valuable resource for education, recreation and research. However, these collections are a dynamic resource; they constantly evolve to meet the changing needs of the community. And the very best examples from these collections will be made available to every homeowner as Arboretum Introductions.

James Bauml is senior biologist and plant taxonomist at the Arboretum.

Judith L. Nagby

Trumpet-shaped flowers of Tabebuia chrysotricha, *introduced by the Arboretum, add a touch of gold to local gardens.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH, APRIL, MAY 1984

LOS ANGELES STATE AND COUNTY ARBORETUM, Arcadia

MARCH 10, 11 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Girl Scout Flower Show
Sierra Madres Girl Scout Council

MARCH 24 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Environmental Education Fair
Hosted by L.A. County Arboretum

MARCH 31, APRIL 1 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Specialty Iris Show
Aril Society International

APRIL 7, 8 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Mame Show
Mame Bonsai Society of So. Cal.

APRIL 14, 15 — Sat. noon to 4:30 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Amaryllis Show
Southern California Hemerocallis and Amaryllis Society

APRIL 18 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Herbal Victorian Fair
Herb Society of America, So. Cal. Unit

APRIL 20, 21, 22 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Cactus and Succulent Show
San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

APRIL 28, 29 — Sat. 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Rose Show
Pacific Rose Society

MAY 5 — 5:30 to 8 p.m.
Baldwin Bonanza Preview Party

MAY 6 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Baldwin Bonanza
A plant sale

MAY 19, 20 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Satsuki and Azalea Show
Satsuki and Azalea Society

MAY 20 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Epiphyllum Show
Epiphyllum Society

MAY 26, 27, 28 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bonsai Show
Santa Anita Bonsai Society
All events sponsored by the California Arboretum Foundation

DESCANSO GARDENS, La Canada

MARCH 17, 18 — Sat. 1 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Daffodil Show
Southern California Daffodil Society

MARCH 24 through APRIL 1 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Spring Flower Show

APRIL 6 through MAY 3 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Artist of the Month—Katherine Myers
Art Gallery

APRIL 21, 22 — Sat. 1 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Rose Show
San Fernando Valley Rose Society

MAY 9 through MAY 31 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Artist of the Month — Betty McMurry
Art Gallery
All events sponsored by the Descanso Gardens Guild

SOUTH COAST BOTANIC GARDEN, Palos Verdes Peninsula

MARCH 4 — 2 p.m.
Houseplants, a lecture
Kathy Andell, Inner Gardens
Colorscaping

MARCH 11 — 2 p.m.
Flower arranging, a demonstration
Gudron Kimmel & Helen Gates, floral designers

MARCH 18 — 2 p.m.
Outdoor orchid, a lecture
Dr. Robert Streeter,
South Bay Orchid Society

MARCH 25 — 2 p.m.
Different methods of propagation, a demonstration, Shirley Bradley

APRIL 1 — 2 p.m.
African violets, a lecture
George Crouchet,
African Violet Council of America

APRIL 8 — 2 p.m.
Spring Concert
Richard Schwalbe,
Palos Verdes Symphonic Band

APRIL 15 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
All about herbs show
Kirby Davis

APRIL 29 — 2 p.m.
Hanging flower basket demonstration
Jan Cameron Zalba

MAY 12, 13 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Fiesta de Flores
A plant sale

MAY 19, 20 — Sat. 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Rose Show
South Coast Rose Society
All events sponsored by the South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation